



Petrified Forest



Painted Desert



Petroglyphs



Painted Desert Inn



Pronghorn



Fossil phytosaur skull

Natural Neighborhoods

Best known for its vast deposits of petrified wood, today Petrified Forest National Park is part of the Intermountain Basins semi-arid grassland—an environment with many natural neighborhoods. Winters are cold with a chance of snowstorms while summers are hot and thunderstorms bring the possibility of moisture during the monsoon season. Drought is common, sometimes lasting for years. While many visitors think that nothing can survive in what appears to be a barren place, hundreds of species of plants and animals live here. If you are lucky, you may see pronghorn along the park road, browsing among the shrubs, or hear the liquid song of a western meadowlark near an overlook. Discover the natural neighborhoods of the park, including the open grasslands, riparian areas, badlands, and miniature woodlands along the Painted Desert Rim.

The climate today is very different than the environment represented by the Chinle Formation and its fossils. Beneath the veneer of the modern park, an ancient world waits to be discovered. Petrified wood is only one of the many types of fossils found in the park. Fossilized remains of giant reptiles and amphibians, early dinosaurs, fish, ferns, cycads, and trees represent ancient ecosystems. Studying the layers of the colorful Chinle Formation, scientists continue to put together the story of the Late Triassic.

Archeologists also tell the story of the Petrified Forest through the clues left by past inhabitants, such as artifacts, remnants of villages, and evocative petroglyphs. The human story extends over 10,000 years. From ancient groups of hunter-gatherers to Route 66, this region has been a well traveled crossroad.

Enjoy the ancient Petrified Forest, but don't forget that it is a living park as well. Take in the vast landscape from an overlook at the edge of the Painted Desert, walk a trail amidst the petrified logs, or merely sit and enjoy Petrified Forest and its natural neighborhoods.



Both the current and the Late Triassic environments are represented in the Petrified Forest National Wilderness Area: living shrubs and grasses near fossils and ancient river deposits.

What's Inside?

- 1.....The Living Park
- 4.....Park Map and Rules and Regulations
- 5.....Trails and Safety
- 6.....Park Activities
- 7.....Wilderness Camping and Horses
- 8.....Special Events and Activities
- 9.....Education, Junior Ranger, and Volunteers
- 10...Area Information, Climate, Museum Association, and Park Fees
- 11...Continuation of The Living Park
- 12...Kids' Corner

Welcome!

Even in a region graced with so many wonderful national park areas, Petrified Forest National Park is a unique place. Along with the strange and beautiful Painted Desert, hundreds of archeological sites, a National Historic Landmark, stretches of native grassland, and one of the largest petrified wood deposits in the world, Petrified Forest also offers a chance for silence, solitude, and contemplation.

Most of our visitors concentrate along the overlooks and short trails of the 28-mile park road. In summer, our busiest season, parking areas are packed and facilities are crowded. Like many of the national parks, years of use have made an impact.

Fortunately, the concern and efforts of National Park employees, volunteers, and our visitors aid in the stewardship of Petrified Forest National Park. One of the biggest dangers our park faces is the illegal removal of park resources, particularly petrified wood. With the help of visitors, this selfish act can diminish.

Join us in preserving and protecting one of the most fascinating national parks. Walk the trails amidst ancient petrified logs, take in the wide vistas of the Painted Desert, discover voices of the past in the petroglyphs, listen to the silence of wilderness.

Enjoy your park!

Cliff Spencer, Superintendent



Did You Know?
Standing on the edge of a vast badlands landscape, a Spanish explorer is rumored to have named the area *El Desierto Pintado*—the Painted Desert—because the hills looked like they were painted with the colors of the sunset.



Ranger programs are available year-round